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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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1 May 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: National Intelligence Officer for Warning
FROM: Carl W. Ford, Jr.
National Intelligence Officer for East Asia
SUBJECT: 22 April 1987 East Asia Warning and Forecast Report

1. The April EA Warning Meeting was devoted to a discussion of the presidential succession issue in South Korea. Although there are several possible ways in which the succession could be accomplished, including a possible coup, the meeting focused on constitutional procedures. Now that Chun cannot extend his tenure legally, we anticipate that he will manipulate the legal/constitutional mechanisms for succession to select someone trustworthy and acceptable.

Legal Mechanisms

2. [REDACTED] OEA, discussed constitutional mechanisms for selecting a new president. The presidential election will be indirect, with the new president being elected by an Electoral College which in turn is elected by the public. The Electoral College must meet and select the new president 30-90 days before the expiration of Chun's term on 24 February 1988. Chun has said his successor will be elected late this year, and the date will probably be between 10-20 December.

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3. The election of Electors must occur 12-20 days before the electoral college meets; consequently, the public election will likely be the last week of November or first week of December. Some of the interesting features of the campaign laws include:

- Presidential candidates can campaign, but appearances are strictly limited; for example they can make only three TV or radio appearances.
- Names of presidential candidates do not appear on the ballot; names of electors do. Electoral college candidates have only two opportunities to campaign in person--they appear together with other candidates in their districts and have 30 minutes each to introduce themselves and announce their presidential preferences.

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- There will probably be slightly over 2,000 election districts, with 20,000-50,000 residents in each district. Rural voters will be overrepresented.
- Electoral college candidates must have resided in the district for six months and must be recommended by 50-150 local voters; they can run under a party affiliation or as independents.
- The electoral college campaigns are government funded.

4. This process strongly favors pro-government DJP electoral candidates, and there probably will be no need to resort to ballot box stuffing for the government candidates to win. If anything, the problem will be just the opposite--ensuring that the opposition carries enough electors so that the election appears credible. The primary reasons the government candidates have such an advantage are:

- Fear of government retaliation may result in a shortage of local figures willing to stand for opposition parties in the electoral college campaign.
- The slate tends to get overloaded with so-called "independents" who hope for favors from the government in return for their vote.
- Election laws prohibit persons who have been convicted of or are under indictment for an imprisonable crime, including political violation, from running as presidential candidates or electors. Kim Dae Jung is excluded under this provision (also for not meeting the continuous residency requirement).
- A presidentially appointed Constitutional Commission can disband any political party if it is in "conflict with basic democracy." So far this power has not been used, but could be if an opposition party too strongly challenges the government.
- Without electors standing for each party for each seat, potential opposition voters are effectively disenfranchised even before the voting booths open.

5. Consequently, the electoral college will likely be heavily weighted in favor of pro-government candidates. Moreover, while the DJP will designate Chun's preferred candidate as early as June, there are still mechanisms within the Electoral College that could produce a last-hour change in the transition scenario. One provision allows independent presidential candidates to enter their names on the Electoral College ballot within 7 days after the electors are elected, provided that they can get the signatures of 300 newly elected electors placing them on the ballot. Should Chun change his mind, he could use this provision to try to push for a different successor. Electoral College proceedings are conducted behind closed doors, a situation which allows the government ample opportunity to strongarm the electors. However, should Chun try to use this method to maneuver a malleable successor into office at the last minute, the legitimacy of the succession would be undermined, and there would likely be sharp reactions in both the ruling and opposition camps.

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Potential Successors

6. [REDACTED] OEA, discussed potential successors to Chun Du Hwan, and their strengths and weaknesses as candidates. Chun himself will be the main factor in determining the succession, and a fundamental question is whether he will allow a strong leader to succeed, or whether he will try to arrange for the succession of a weaker person that he can try to manipulate in office.

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7. The person now being touted by government media is DJP Chairman Roh Tae Woo, who, for the past two years, has become increasingly regarded as the unofficial heir apparent. Factors in his favor are:

- A longstanding close relationship with Chun, is a member of the same Korean Military Academy (KMA) class, participated in the coup that brought Chun to power, and is loyal.
- Assurances from Chun that he will be the successor.
- A better public image than Chun. He has high visibility, and probably has the best stature in the ruling circle.
- Well regarded by the senior military.

8. The negative factors are:

- Roh may be too strong a leader for Chun to manipulate.
- Chun may not fully trust Roh.
- Roh was in charge of recent failed constitutional negotiations and may be made a scapegoat.

9. Should Roh fail to get the nod, a number of other potential successors are waiting in the wings. Most of these would probably be comparatively weak leaders, but two of them would be strong. Among the key secondary contenders:

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10. Whatever Chun plans to do, the military will also have a key voice in the succession. Most key military leaders want a president who is strong, can run the government, protect against instability, and prevent North Korean aggression. If Chun picks someone who is deemed not to meet these conditions, the military could become more assertive in the decision process.

Comments by Ambassador Walker

11. Former Ambassador to South Korea and present SRP member Dr. Richard L. Walker discussed his observations of the succession based on his experience dealing with some of the key personalities discussed. A major factor is Chun's capacity for surprise. While Chun exudes formality in the presence of others, his operating style is "ad-hoc-ery." For example, his announcement to suspend efforts for constitutional revision came as a surprise to many. We should anticipate that he will act similarly during the succession process.

12. There are continuing strong forces for stability in Seoul. The economy is performing very successfully and economic institutions are holding firm. Family ties remain strong, and a pervasive and overlapping bureaucracy, including the military and the police, reinforce stability. The activities of the opposition are creating political fatigue in the capital; Chun may have successfully mastered the "two Khomenis" by simply waiting them out. The public is tiring of their antics. A small number of students, perhaps 4,000

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out of a total of 800,000, have become increasingly radicalized. This small group can grab headlines with their demonstrations and activities, however, the lack of greater student violence thus far this Spring is evidence of the degree of government control.

13. Chun reportedly wants a summit with Kim Il-song, and should he press for this grand surprise, the development of North-South relations will also affect the succession. Things might actually be on put hold if such a dramatic North-South meeting develops.

14. Based on Ambassador Walker's personal assessment, Chun has already thought through the succession game plan. He has assured Congressman Solarz that the constitution will be upheld, and that he will step down. Ambassador Walker believes that Roh will likely be Chun's successor.

Discussion

15. The general discussion centered on the possibility of surprises as the succession develops. Among the key points made were the following:

- South Korea's political stability will be affected by the manner in which Chun surrenders power as his successor is named. The exchange of power could be fraught with potential instability -- after all, no orderly transfer of power has yet occurred in South Korea.
- Chun's unpredictability and propensity for dramatic gestures also raise the prospect that problems with the succession could arise, even if he plans to follow an orderly process.
- Even as Chun begins to surrender power to a prospective successor, his control of the security apparatus and the ceremonial aspects of the office will give him a significant voice in developments until the day he steps down.
- Should the constitutional processes be seriously manipulated or thwarted, or should the successor prove to be weak, the prospects for renewed instability will increase significantly.
- Once the succession is accomplished and the Olympics are over, constitutional reform will come up again.
- The opposition is in no state to stage some kind of a surprise and to make a genuine bid for power. The opposition may be becoming disillusioned with its leaders, and new opposition leaders could arise in the next few months.
- The South Korean people probably would react very negatively to martial law, but they probably also do not like the antics of the opposition.

Warning Implications

16. Polls indicate that South Koreans carry deep suspicions about politicians in general, including opposition leaders. The economic boom is strengthening the middle class which has a vested interest in stability.

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Radicalized students are viewed as extremist and are a small minority of the population. The potential for instability will increase if Chun alienates the middle class and enhances the appeal of the radical elements by too overtly manipulating the succession mechanisms.

17. If Roh is the successor, as present trends seem to indicate, he will likely be a strong leader. His skills as a negotiator were proven in getting Seoul selected as the site for the 1988 summer Olympics. If he gets the Presidency, he will not easily knuckle under to pressure. His calm and smooth manner belies a very shrewd and tough personality.



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